

**FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK**

Dear Parishioners,

Many of us struggle with the fact that God doesn't always answer our prayers in the way that we would like. I think the essay below by Susan Erichsen offers us some good insight on how we can learn to be at peace with the way that the Lord responds to us.

With my prayers,

Fr. Conley

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**WHEN GOD SAYS 'NO'** by Susan Erichsen

**Seven truths to keep in mind when our prayers seem to go unanswered.**

"Ask and it will be given to you: seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Mt 7:7). These words keep us fingering our rosary beads, making novenas and reading from our prayer books. Yet diseases still rage. Loved ones stay away from the Church. Jobs are lost. Marriages fail. So why do we keep falling on our knees and lifting up our prayers over and over?

Perhaps it is the second part of Our Lord's beautiful promise about prayer. "Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. (Mt 7:9-11).

So, what happens when we do not get what we wanted, or when it feels like we have been handed a stone instead of bread or a snake instead of a fish? Do we think our prayers have been wasted? Like pouting children, do we want to walk away and declare we will no longer believe in this supreme being? Or do we feel that some other good thing has been given to us? Here are seven truths to keep in mind when our prayers seem to go unanswered.

**1. WE ARE NOT GOD**

We need to think of prayer as humble asking and not spoiled demanding. It is our job to serve God. It is not his job to work for us. Fortunately, we are blessed with a God who loves us and loves to give us good things. But we must remember he is still the one in charge. He is the one who knows all. He knows what is best for us, even if a situation seems painful and unreasonable to us.

The image of Jesus as our Good Shepherd is a helpful one for when we pray. We are the sheep, and sheep are rather stupid animals. They do not know what is best for them. They do not know the way to go. That is why they always need a shepherd. We must humbly admit we are the sheep, not the shepherd. Our ideas of what we need or of what we think someone else needs might be misdirected or unwise.

God is the wise Father. He knows what is best for us. Like children, we often go to our Father with

unreasonable requests. Yet, it is not God's job to spoil us. He smiles at us like a benevolent parent who listens kindly to a young child's outrageous pleas. And sometimes, out of great and everlasting love, he goes along with our simple and short-sighted ideas. But sometime he says, "No way! That will not work." And we, foolish children that we are, do not understand why we can't have ice cream sundaes for breakfast every day. We cannot have all that we want, even though God is the most loving and generous father in all the world.

Prayer helps us to surrender to God's will. It is easier to accept his will when we know that we have humbly asked, he has lovingly listened and now the final outcome is not in our feeble hands but in his great and wise ones.

**2. GOD MAY HAVE A BETTER PLAN**

Sometimes, when we look back on our lives, we realize we should thank God for unanswered prayers. Maybe we now know the car, job or house for which we once prayed would not have worked out so well. But the most significant unanswered prayer was Jesus's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:42).

By not honoring this anguished prayer from his own Son, God saved us all. If God did not fulfill his Son's prayer of agony, we certainly cannot expect him to answer our every prayer. But he will do good things for us. We just need to remember every prayer should include the caveat which Jesus taught us to pray: "your kingdom come, your will be done" (Mt 6:10).

God tells us through the prophet Jeremiah that his will is always good. "I know well the plans I have in mind for you...plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope" (Jer 29:11). The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms this, saying: "Do not be troubled if you do not receive immediately from God what you ask him: for he desires to do something even greater for you, while you cling to him in prayer" (No. 2737)

To see the ways God answers our prayers, we must open our hearts to the unexpected reply. It could be a new turn of events. It could be a passing word that inspires us. It could be the appearance of someone who solves our problem in a way we never considered.

We should remember God's plan is to make each of us saints. His way to do that might be different from our own plans. Mother Teresa once wrote, "For 20 years in Loreto I prayed fervently to be forgotten, nothing to the world, to be ignored and held for nothing - and this is how the Lord has answered my prayer."

**3. SUFFERING IS NECESSARY**

We often pray to end suffering. It might be our own suffering, the suffering of a loved one or the suffering of the world. It might be the physical suffering of sickness or the mental suffering of a bad situation. These are

good and honorable requests. So, when these prayers seem to go unanswered, it can cause some people to turn their backs on God.

There are no easy answers as to why we suffer. Suffering is one of the greatest challenges of our faith. Yet, if God's own Son suffered, what makes us think we should be spared? In his book "On Hope," Pope Francis reminds us that Jesus did not suffer so we could "go to heaven in a carriage." Our Lord suffered to show us the way. While we cannot expect God to take away all of our suffering, we do know he will walk with us every step of the way, just as he walked every step to Calvary. So as long as God is walking alongside us, we might as well talk to him. The extra prayers we offer in times of suffering can draw us closer to God for the rest of our lives. Pope Francis tells us, "Suffering cannot be eliminated, yet it can have meaning." (Lumen Fidei, No 56).

Our suffering can be a prayer we offer for others in greater need than us. Just as the cross of Jesus saves us, our own suffering can help another person. Even the pain of something as simple as a needle drawing blood can be offered as a prayer for someone who has a much greater burden. Yet we would have no suffering to offer if our every prayer was answered. This life would be heaven. But it is not. This life is full of clouds. Clouds can be good. The setting or rising of the sun is on the horizon to reflect the rays of the sun. And so, it is with suffering. It reflects the glory of God.

(To be continued)

#### **MONDAY-The Sam & Kaye Show 10-11am**

Our hosts will present the second episode in their three-part series, "The Holy Spirit Convicts." The first episode of the series is available on our parish webpage. Please join us for this enlightening conversation about the important work of the Holy Spirit and bring us closer to Jesus Christ.

**WEDNESDAY - JOIN US FOR COMMUNITY PRAYERS** via phone or internet using Zoom. We pray the Psalms on Wednesdays at 6:30 PM. In addition, we have praise and worship each Thursday at 6:30 PM. Don't isolate yourselves spiritually! Join your fellow parishioners in prayer.

#### **WATCH ONLINE EVENING OF RECOLLECTION**

From Franciscan University of Steubenville  
Speakers include Father Dave Pivonka, Sr. Miriam James Heidland and Dr. Scott Hahn You can access this prerecorded event at the link below

<https://store.steubenvilleconferences.com/night-of-hope-livestream/>

**ONLINE HEALING RETREAT** with Dr. Mary Healy and others. This retreat starts on August 5 and you can register at by using this link. <https://praymoreretreat.org/>

#### **REOPENING OUR SCHOOL**

As of now, we are being told by the Archdiocese that we are able to follow the directives of the Catholic Schools Office for reopening as long as Governor Hogan does not reinstate restrictions or issue another stay at home order. Plans for reopening St. Mary's School are well underway. A committee of faculty members has been formed to create a preliminary plan to address the health and safety concerns of our parents, students and teachers. On July 1st, a survey was emailed to all school parents to collect their input on school reopening. On July 15, we will receive health and safety guidelines from the Catholic School's office that must be addressed in our plan. Our school guidelines for reopening must be submitted to the ADW Catholic Schools Office for approval no later than July 30th. Once approved, we will send the reopening plan to the school parents and St. Mary's Community. If you have questions or concerns please feel free to email our principal, Mrs. Catherine Silverstone at [silverstone@bryantown.org](mailto:silverstone@bryantown.org).

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#### **MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:**

**SUN:** 8am Joseph Alfred Chase, 10am Sonny Goldsmith, 12N Parishioners, **MON:** 8am Communion Service **TUES:** 8am **NO MASS**, **WED:** 8am Communion Service **THURS:** 8am **NO MASS**, **FRI:** 9:30am Communion Service **SAT:** 4pm Mary Elsie Dyson, 6pm James (Smash) Stewart.

#### **PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY**

**PRAYERS:** Eunice Amey, Mary Bowes, Deacon Gene & Anne Burroughs, Quint Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Dottie Chick, Joe Cross, Kendall Farrell, Arlene Gandolfi, Lee Gardiner, James Gibson, Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, A. Matthews, John Nichols, Johnny Norman, John Reeves, Mary Reeves, Melissa Rollins, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Beth Weise, Billie Whittington, Michael Whittington, Jr., Brice Zimmer.

#### **OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:**

\$8,670.00. \$3367.00 of that was received from people who contribute through online banking. The unidentified donations totaled \$236.00. We received \$40.00 for our School Support.